

Landscaping While Protecting Our Creeks And Bay

**How to do home improvement projects
while protecting local waterways.**

Whether you plan to do landscaping improvements yourself or to hire a contractor, you can help protect local creeks and wetlands of the South Bay watershed.

Here in San Jose, runoff water flows from driveways, streets and gutters into storm drains. Water flowing through storm drains goes directly to nearby creeks, and ultimately to the South Bay. On its way to storm drains, runoff water picks up soil, pesticides, oil, grease, and other pollutants. This water **does not** receive any treatment to remove pollutants. Local ordinances prohibit anything other than uncontaminated rainwater from entering the storm drain system.

Can landscaping projects harm creeks and wetlands?

Yes, home-landscaping projects not properly managed can harm the environment. If soils are disturbed during activities such as planting, installing irrigation systems, or concrete work then sediments may be washed into the storm drain system.

What can I do?

- Read this brochure to understand how to use some pollution prevention techniques when landscaping your yard.
- If you use contractors, be sure they are familiar with the practices listed, or include them in your contract. Remember...You are responsible for all work performed at your home.

Site Preparation

- A healthy yard requires fewer chemicals to maintain.
- Get to know your soil characteristics. The better informed you are, the better you can select plants and soil amendments to help your yard thrive. There are many good landscaping books at libraries and bookstores to help you get started.

- Amending your soil with organic compost will help create healthy soil, and help plants resist disease and thrive with less care.

Excavation Work

Whenever you move soil near a sidewalk or driveway you increase the likelihood that sediments will wash into storm drains. Sediments can clog the gills of fish in local streams, cover salmon spawning grounds and collect pollutants including oil, metals, and pesticides. Sediment also reduces the available sunlight needed by tiny aquatic plants. As a result, the food supply decreases for animals that make creeks and wetlands their home.

- Minimize erosion from your landscaping work site by scheduling work during the dry weather season.
- Sweep dirt off of paved surfaces to prevent tracking or washing into the street.
- Replant as soon as possible, using temporary vegetation such as annual grass seed. Vegetation provides excellent erosion control.
- When your work is done make sure that bare dirt is not mounded where it could erode onto paved surfaces.

Driveway & Sidewalk Work

- Wash water from newly poured concrete is caustic and could be harmful if washed into creeks through the storm drain system.
- Never wash excess material from patio, bricklaying, or driveway construction into the curb, gutter, or storm drain. Use a shovel and broom to clean up the residue and place it in the garbage.
- When you or your contractor are exposing aggregate near a gutter, dam the gutter with plastic trash bags partially filled with sand or dirt. Work with someone to pump up this wastewater (e.g. using a wet/dry shop vac). Dispose of this and any other cleanup water onto a dirt area, where it can be allowed to dry. Sweep up any residue from the gutter behind the dam, after the water has dried. Also, sweep the residue of any water that leaked past the dam. Put this residue in the garbage.
- Wash off tools, concrete mixer or truck chute, and wheelbarrows onto a dirt area, where they can dry. Then put dried solids in the garbage.
- Call Recycle Plus customer service at 277-2700 for weight and size limitations on concrete disposal or for listings of authorized debris box and on-site cleanup service providers.
- Cover and protect open bags of cement and plaster. Be sure to keep windblown cement powder away from gutters, storm drains, rainfall, and runoff.

Yard Maintenance

Pesticides and fertilizers that wash into creeks and wetlands are harmful to the environment. Leaves and grass clippings washed into our creeks decompose, removing oxygen needed by fish.

- If you use pesticides or fertilizers, only mix enough to do the job. Follow manufacturer directions, and be careful not to over-apply or use when rain is likely.
- Rinse empty containers, and apply rinse water just as you would use the product. Dispose of empty rinsed containers as garbage.
- DO NOT ALLOW ANY PESTICIDES OR FERTILIZERS TO RUN INTO THE STREET, GUTTER OR STORM DRAIN.
- Never hose down driveways, sidewalks or streets. Use a broom or rake instead, then place yard trimmings in your home composting bin or out for curbside collection. Dispose of debris in your garbage container.
- Do not blow or rake leaves or other debris into the street.
- For more information about proper yard trimming setouts, call Recycle Plus Customer Service at 277-2700.

For More Information About...
Gardening Techniques, Composting,
& Organic Pest Control:

U.C. Cooperative Extension
Master Gardener Program
(408) 299-2638

Pollution Prevention Tips
(408) 945-3000

To Report Illegal Dumping into San Jose Creeks or Storm Drains:

(408) 945-3000

If at any time you see hazardous materials enter the storm drain system, immediately call 9-1-1.